

Law Societies Reported as 'Useful' by Lawyers; as 'Watchdog' by Public

The following poll report comes from LawTalk, vol 477, 26 May 1997, journal of the New Zealand Law Society and was written by Graham Wear, Coordinator, NZLS PR Committee.

Many lawyers are not averse to criticising the NZLS and the district societies - but when it comes to the crunch, these organisations can take heart from the recent polls.

While it might be going just a shade over the top to say that the law societies are deeply loved and needed, two thirds of all the 670 lawyers who were polled said they found the law societies useful or very useful. Only 21% had reservations about their usefulness, with the remainder non-committal.

The poll threw up a variation in attitudes between lawyers in the bigger cities and those who practice elsewhere.

The NZLS was considered to be useful by 61% of lawyers from Auck-

land, Wellington, Canterbury and Otago, while 71% from other areas considered that it was useful.

Conversely, the district society was considered as more useful by lawyers in Auckland (70%), Waikato/Bay of Plenty (69%) and Canterbury (75%) while in other districts the average rating was 56%.

When it came to the question of compulsory or voluntary membership of law societies, most practitioners were firmly in favour of the status quo, with 70% supporting compulsory membership of the NZLS and 65% for compulsory district law society membership.

Two thirds of respondents supported the provision of a range of discounted

services to members (such as petrol, air fares, stationary, etc). About half of those polled also expressed interest in having the law societies provide assistance in such areas as marketing, specialist skills, risk management and office technology.

Members of the public were also asked about the law societies. Overall perceptions were positive, with the NZLS being seen as a watchdog for standards on the profession. Nine out of ten people polled were aware of the NZLS (dropping to 80% of Maori). Awareness of district law societies was considerably lower, with one in two of those aware of NZLS unaware of district societies.

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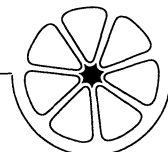
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